

Sri Krishna Reaches Out on Janmashtami

<https://youtu.be/4Je8bnf5K98>

Bhakti is *ahaituky apratihata*. It can neither be achieved through mundane efforts nor be terminated by any mundane cause (SB 1.2.6). But bhakti can be obtained and nurtured in the association of Lord's devotees. It can be ignited and spread through the association of Vaishnavas. It was this knowledge, faith and desire to spread the love for Godhead that spurred the outreach Janmashtami program for the greater Wellington urban region. This year, devotees from Wellington's Journey of Self Discovery (JOSD) group under the guidance of HG Ambarish Maharaj Das and HG Anang Manjari Devi Dasi, chose to celebrate the advent of Lord Sri Krishna with the community in Upper Hutt city.



The Janmashtami festivities kicked off amidst a spiritually charged ambience laced with the melodious reverberation of Vaishnava songs glorifying the Supreme Lord. For the pleasure of those gathered, the Archa-Vigraha (Deity) form of Lord Krishna manifested Himself along with His Hladini Shakti, Radharani, to attract their minds, service, and awaken their love. ISKCON Wellington temple president HG Jagjeevan Prabhuji and his wife HG Sudevi Mataji inaugurated the festivities with panchamrita abhishek of the Lord. The venue was filled to the brim with over 200 devotees who eagerly participated to offer homage to their Lordships. The entire ceremony was projected on a big screen so that everyone could relish the blessing of the Lord's darshana. It was a spectacular sight to behold.



After the Lord's abhishek, devotee children displayed grace and exuberance when they united to steal everyone's heart with their enchanting smiles and creative dresses. They walked the floor dressed as Lord Sri Krishna and His many avatars, engaging the audience with their innocence and charm. Prominent among those appearances were those of Lord Narasimhadeva with Prahalad Maharaj and Lakshmi Devi, Sri Sri Sita-Rama-Lakshmana, Sri Sri Krishna-Balaram, Sri Sri Radha-Krishna, Sri Sri Balaji-Sridevi-Bhudevi, Sri Sri Vittala-Rukmini and Sri Sri Chaitanya-Nityananda.



This colourful event subsequently yielded the stage to an insightful discourse by HG Ambarish Maharaj Das who recapitulated the story of Lord Krishna's mystical appearance in the prison hall of Mathura. He systematically explained the transcendental nature of Lord Krishna's appearance, birth and activities. Responding to a question, HG Ambarish Prabhuji recounted his own inspiring journey and personal transformation from being a materially successful professional, to a spiritual practitioner and joyous bhakti yogi. During his discourse he dispelled many myths and inaccurate beliefs about the advent of Lord Krishna and His spiritual pastimes. For the benefit of aspiring devotees, he presented research around historic and archaeological evidences of the Lord's presence on earth 5,000 years ago to re-establish the principles of religion and deliver the pious.



Other highlights of the evening that attracted enthusiastic participation included a humorous drama, children's colouring competition, Gopi-dots face painting, JOSD exhibition and the Bhaktivedanta book stall. This jubilant evening culminated with a prize distribution ceremony for children to celebrate their creative colouring skills and their exquisite Krishna avatar costumes. The event concluded with a sumptuous maha-prasadam prepared by devotees with love and care. Not only did this serve to satiate the material appetite of the attendees, but it kindled their spiritual longing as well. Although the program concluded that evening, the rich memories it created would be fondly remembered for years to come, both by the participants and the JOSD members.



The Lord showered His mercy upon weeks of tireless endeavour by devotees to let the wider community relish the nectar of devotional service and experience the higher taste of bhakti on this auspicious occasion. Just as in Jagannath puri, Lord Jagannath comes out to give His darshana to the devotees, it appeared that Lord Krishna had come out to give His darshana to the Upper Hutt fraternity. This outreach Janmashtami program was JOSD Wellington's humble attempt to pay tribute to Srila Prabhupada and to carry forward his mission of spreading the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. To conclude in the words of our acharya, "If even one person becomes a pure devotee of the Lord, we shall consider our attempt a success."(BG Preface)



All glories to Srila Praphupada! All Glories to Guru and Gauranga!